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***FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE***

**Kankakee Riverfront Master Plan Wins Award**

**Kankakee, IL** – Earlier this evening the Illinois Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects presented a Merit Award to the City of Kankakee for its Kankakee Riverfront Master Plan. Mayor Chasity Wells-Armstrong accepted the award on behalf of the citizens and community leaders who invested countless hours on the transformational plan. Rick Hitchcock, Founder and Senior Principal of Hitchcock Design Group, the landscape architect and lead consultant, represented the consultant team, which included Market and Feasibility Advisors, Market and Real Estate Economics, S2o Design and Engineering, Whitewater Recreation, Piggush Engineering and Water Resources Engineering.

For decades after its settlement in 1853, the Kankakee River was central to the city's image, culture and prosperity, and it remains the cleanest river in the state and one of only 21 designated National Water Trails in the country. During 2017, newly elected Mayor Wells-Armstrong put riverfront improvements at the center of her "Kankakee Forward" agenda. As a result of working collaboratively with the Hitchcock Design Group team, a dedicated group of community leaders and dozens of diverse public and private sector stakeholders, a multi-dimensional strategy was developed to create and sustain an extraordinary riverfront that is the catalyst for Kankakee's renaissance as a premiere Illinois riverfront community.

In the Kankakee Riverfront Master Plan, Hitchcock Design Group identifies a series of incremental policy, operational and capital improvements that when complete, will produce a package of distinctive river attractions, river connections, and adjacent residential and commercial development, tied together by a powerful river-centric

brand. The central attraction, the downtown Riverwalk Mill Race District, will feature a high-amenity Riverwalk, an intensely programmed festival street, and a national-caliber whitewater feature cut through the existing 9-foot low-head dam – surrounded by a lively mix of residential and commercial development. Spacious, well-appointed trails will connect the Riverwalk Mill Race District to other attractions, such as a nature-based children’s playground, and the surrounding neighborhoods along the 4-mile riverfront.

Modeled after many successful, large-scale riverfronts and conservancies across the country, Hitchcock Design Group also recommends a combination of state and federal grants, Tax Increment Financing, and philanthropy to fund the \$25M downtown Riverwalk and riverfront improvements. Over the first 10 years, the consultants estimate that Riverwalk Mill Race improvements will generate \$12M of annually recurring economic impact.

Since the plan was adopted by the City Council in 2018, the city has made important progress toward the plan’s ambitious objectives by creating the Riverfront Tax Increment Financing District, appointing the Riverfront Implementation Team and obtaining funding for the acquisition of key riverfront properties. The Riverfront Implementation Team is currently advancing plans to light prominent riverfront structures, increase riverfront programming, and design and fund the first Riverwalk segment including the upstream portage, east of the low-head dam.

The award was presented at a gala celebration at Ignite Glass Studio in Chicago. The American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) was organized in 1899 and represents almost 18,000 landscape architects, nationwide. The Illinois Chapter of ASLA is one of the largest chapters in the country.

For more information about the Kankakee Riverfront Master Plan, please contact Rick Hitchcock, Hitchcock Design Group, at [rhitchcock@hitchcockdesigngroup.com](mailto:rhitchcock@hitchcockdesigngroup.com).

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The City of Kankakee is dedicated to protecting, building and nurturing the community while enhancing lives. We are a historic, vibrant, and active riverfront community. We continue to transform into an extraordinary place to dream, grow, and thrive. Embracing our diversity, we strive to be progressive, inclusive, and innovative. For more information on the City of Kankakee, please visit the website at [www.citykankakee-il.gov](http://www.citykankakee-il.gov).